

“Drug Prevention Programs and the Fiscal Year 2006 Drug Control Budget:
Is the Federal Government Neglecting Illegal Drug Use Prevention?”

Government Reform Committee

Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources Subcommittee

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Chairman Souder, Ranking Member Cummings and other distinguished members of the Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of Fairfax County Public Schools.

I am pleased to be here today to share my concerns about the 2006 budgetary decision to eliminate funding for the state grants portion of the safe and drug-free schools program. I am here representing Fairfax County Public School's Safe and Drug-Free Youth Section and the school system at large.

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) receives approximately \$564,000 each year from the Virginia Department of Education Safe and Drug Free School's office to accomplish anti-drug related programs. These funds are the foundation on which FCPS drug prevention efforts are based. These funds help provide anti-drug prevention programs to over 230 schools which serve more than 170,000 students in the 12th largest school system in the United States.

The No Child Left Behind Act requires all Safe and Drug Free Schools programs to adhere to the principles of effectiveness and to use funding on scientifically based programs. FCPS has been using these principles of effectiveness since it was first introduced by the Virginia Department of Education and long before the NCLB made it mandatory.

Mr. John Walters, head of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) invited the Safe and Drug-Free Youth Section staff to meet with him and his staff after he entered his position. He wanted to see how an effective school system blended funding from local, state and federal sources into a working process to get the desired results and to prove that their programs were making a difference. We provided Mr. Walters with information on how we used our funding and impressed upon him that the SDFSCA funding was the foundation of all programs in FCPS. FCPS was also the school system chosen by President Bush to bring Mr. Walters when he was announced as the new head of ONDCP.

FCPS system was chosen because of its outstanding drug prevention programs.

In 2001, FCPS completed the Communities That Cares Survey. This survey provided FCPS with much needed information on the direction of its drug prevention programs. In 2003 the follow-up survey was conducted with the following results.

Survey responses indicated that in the 30 days prior to the 2003 survey administration:

- Use of alcohol was reported by:
12.8 percent of 8th graders – compared to 21 percent in 2001
33.2 percent of 10th graders – compared to 36 percent in 2001
45.8 percent of 12th graders – compared to 52.4 percent in 2001
27.6 percent of 12th graders reported binge drinking in the last two weeks compared to 31 percent in 2001

The use of SDFSCA funding helped to reduce alcohol usage at each of the surveyed grade levels.

- Marijuana use was reported by:
2.8 percent of 8th graders – compared to 5.1 percent in 2001
11.6 percent of 10th graders – compared to 13.3 percent in 2001
20.8 percent of 12th graders – compared to 22.4 percent in 2001

The use of SDFSCA funding helped to reduce marijuana usage at each of the surveyed grade levels.

- Cigarette use was reported by:
4.1 percent of 8th graders – compared to 9.3 percent in 2001
12.4 percent of 10th graders – compared to 15.4 percent in 2001
26.7 percent of 12th graders – compared to 29.6 percent in 2001

The use of SDFSCA funding helped to reduce cigarette usage at each of the surveyed grade levels.

The above information demonstrated that the use of SDFSC funding **is making a difference**. The next youth survey will be conducted in October 2005. Because of the increase in prevention activities listed below, we believe these percentages will continue their downward trend as we continue to use the SDFSCA funding to support our programs.

FCPS has also established School Communities Coalitions in order to bring parents, community members, medical, law enforcement, business, faith and many other sectors into the prevention family. Educating the community on the dangers of drugs and how they can support the drug prevention efforts of the schools has proven to be invaluable. These coalitions have become the bridge from the schools to the community and now we all can speak the same drug-free language. Fairfax County, Virginia is one of the most diverse counties in America. These drug prevention coalitions have made it possible to reach out to the many different cultures in the county.

Using scientifically researched-based programs in schools paid for by SDFSCA funding has proven to be invaluable. Such programs as Too Good for Drugs, Life Skills, and Guiding Good Choices are just a few that has provided students and parents with information to help in the prevention of drugs in our schools and communities.

There is a perception that the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) score justifies eliminating the State Grant portion of the SDFCA program. If that same rating tool is used in FCPS, it would soon become evident that our system met the requirements as well as collected data to show a very positive impact with documented outcomes.

As a member of the Executive Board of the National Network for Safe and Drug-Free Schools Coordinators, I feel it is also my role to speak for school systems across America. Elimination of this funding will have a catastrophic effect in the balance of drug usage among school-aged children in America. Many school systems across America have found unique ways to combine these SDFSCA funds with very little local monies in order to provide the highest level of drug prevention. Removing the monetary foundation of these programs could cause many if not all of them to collapse. I know this because in our system, one of the wealthiest in the nation, elimination of these funds would severely impact or cancel many well developed, well documented, and successful drug prevention programs. I can't image how drug prevention programs in other smaller systems will survive.

As a veteran of the United States Air Force for 24 years and now retired, I understand the need to fully fund programs that deter and prevent undesirable and negative behaviors that will impact the American way of life. My current role as the Coordinator of Safe and Drug-Free Schools for FCPS is not much different. I am still in the role of finding ways to prevent undesirable and negative behaviors, in this case drug use among our youngest citizens. Therefore, I was shocked when I first heard the news of the President's Budget for 2006. The message that this budget is sending to our youth and community is simple - we don't care about the health and well-being of our children. I, as well as other school systems across America, am asking for your support to continue to prove to all Americans that our children are truly worth the effort. This funding does make a difference.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important subject.